

**Abstract**

A data storage system for storing data for a host processor includes physical data storage devices each having data storage attributes and an outboard storage manager. The outboard storage manager is operable with the physical data storage devices for presenting to the host processor a virtual data storage image having a desired data storage attribute for a particular data storage application by organizing the physical data storage devices in an arrangement suitable for providing the desired data storage attribute irrespective of the data storage attributes of the physical data storage devices such that the combined physical data storage device arrangement emulates the virtual data storage image. The outboard storage manager is operable to transfer data between the host processor and the organized physical data storage device arrangement via the virtual data storage image.